

With astonishment

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With astonishment

Astonishment is a long and innocent look on the object.

Theodor Adorno

Two articles are presented in this dossier: (1) “No encaço de Oscar” and (2) “A ténue linha entre arquitetura e escultura”, by Flora del Debbio and Marco Rizzi and by Pasqualino Grosso and Carola Brandini, respectively. These texts reflect a perspective on what can become the work of a student in the Integrated Master’s Program in Architecture within a curricular unit of Theory and History of Architecture.

The first article focuses on a compelling photograph taken by Frank Scherschel for *Life* Magazine which shows Oscar Niemeyer in Brasília, during the construction of the city. The text starts with a detailed analysis of the image and then moves on to its background, as well as revealing conclusions on the life and work of one of the most important architects of the 20th century. The second article focuses on a rather unknown piece, *Sculpture Village*, by Frank Gehry with Anthony Caro in 1987. Based on the analysis of this project, the authors are able to draw a series of conclusions on the role of sculpture in the work of one of today’s most important architects. In both articles, the object of research - whether a Frank Scherschel’s photograph or what is left of *Sculpture Village* – is nothing more than a sounding board to critically analyse its author’s work. In both articles, the use of primary sources, such as drawings, photos of models, texts, articles or books published at that time and even interviews conducted



for that specific purpose play a primary role.

In an era when we are programmed for brief, fleeting and utilitarian looks, the authors of these two articles analyse the archive material that was available to them, which they researched with astonishment and, therefore, in close detail. They did something rare, since they opened their minds to what the documents revealed rather than what we intend to see established. Unlike many other texts based on other writings, these articles are based on the primary documents that provide the authors with the clues (today scattered by several institutions, from the Oscar Niemeyer Foundation, in Rio de Janeiro, to the Getty Foundation in Los Angeles). The objects of study are analysed from the inferential critical approach - analytically reconstructing its causes and objectives, deduced from the relation between Niemeyer or Ghery and their objective circumstances, while highlighting aspects that had not been evident until now. The authors start by analysing the phenomena of actual reality in order to infer their universal law. From there, they are able to draw several conclusions based on an unbiased perspective of the objects of study, eventually even refuting some false obvious ideas. Architecture is thus the ultimate validation of any conclusion because it is truly at its origin. These articles are, therefore, original - not because they are different, or not because they are completely new, but because they understand the origin of what they aim to analyse.

These articles evidence the relation between theoretical research and the creative act because it always corresponds to taking a commitment with its actors, aiming to conduct a hypothetical reconstruction of historical situations. In fact, though historical and theoretical study may appear, at first glance, a non-creative exercise, it is indeed a creative one because it implies observing, interpreting, choosing, recreating reality in the true sense of the term (creating it again).

The authors of these articles did not simply do a *project on History* or a *project on Theory*, but they *made History* and they *made Theory*. And within the scope of a Master's Program in architecture one cannot aspire for less. These authors were trained to be potential researchers in Theory and History of Architecture, as well as, and above all, potential architects. For a few moments, they became Oscar Niemeyer and Frank Gehry's close associates while maintaining the awareness of being themselves.